

Telling - Good News That Brings Joy

1. Introduction

a. Read Luke 2

Telling is our theme. These past weeks we have been looking at Waiting and Preparing. Today we will examine telling and next week we will focus on worshipping.

b. Good News. The message to the Shepherds came as Good News. The people of Israel had been living for centuries under great oppression and were longing for deliverance. They were longing for Good News.

i. This year has been a Difficult year with much pain for many of us, and for many different reasons. But even so, if we stop and think we can find some things to be thankful for. Think for a moment back on your year. Did you have some blessings, highlights or breakthroughs among the pain and confusion? One of my blessings is the mergence and planting of this church – Holy Trinity. We have relationships and friends we didn't have just a year ago.

c. At the time of our story, Israel was still in the midst of centuries of hopelessness and discouragement. They were longing for some Good News... This leads us to our story we are looking at today. Good News that brings joy

2. Background

a. Context

i. Our passage begins with a reference to Caesar Augustus. This immediately sets out a contrast between Caesar Augustus and Jesus Christ. During the 20th century (some say 19th century) an inscription was found in Turkey (ancient Asia Minor) that helps set the context for our message. It was made in reference to Caesar Augustus. Here is a translation of the text

1. Priene Inscription: 'It seemed good to the Greeks of Asia, in the opinion of the high priest Apollonius of Menophilus Azanitus: "Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior, both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good tidings [εὐαγγέλιον] for the world that came by reason of him," which Asia resolved in Smyrna.'

a. This inscription uses several terms that are also used in Luke. Such as Savior and Good news – or joyous announcement

2. Other Ideas

a. Pax Romana - Peace bringer - Caesar Augustus had ended a civil war that threatened to destroy the empire and had brought peace to "the whole world", or at least the "whole Roman world".

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- b. Caesar was also called Lord
 - 3. The inscription was a declaration by the people to adopt a new calendar based on Augustus's birthday to mark the beginning of a new era and a new kingdom.
 - 4. Conclusion: The Romans believed that Augustus was the savior who brought peace to the world, that he was a god and that a new era and a new kingdom had been birthed through Him.
 - 5. Luke deliberately challenges Caesar's claims. He refers to Jesus as Lord and Savior and it is through God that peace comes. The good news which brings joy is the news of Jesus birth. The new era had begun, but it was begun not by Caesar, but by Jesus.
 - 6. Conclusion: Luke challenges the culture of the day. In effect he says, Jesus is the true Lord and King who has come as the savior of the world. It is through Him that true peace comes to those who find favor with God. In Jesus, a new era and a new Kingdom have been launched that is far greater than that of Rome.
- b. Date
- i. Caesar Augustus was in power from 27 BC until 14 AD. Quirinius was governor of Syria – He was known to be governor in AD 6-16, but many historians believe he was also governor from 3-2 BC. He apparently was the military governor during the earlier time alongside a civil governor.
 - ii. First census – there is a known census in AD 6, but that is too late (Acts 5:37 and Josephus). Many believe there was an earlier census that took place as early as 8 BC and as late as 3-2 BC. These factors give us an approximate dating for Jesus birth
 - iii. In 525 Pope John 1 commissioned that a date be calculated for Jesus birth. This is where we get our current historical date. Scholars believe that the date was not calculated accurately and was off by a couple years. Modern attempts to calculate the year of his birth conclude that it took place sometime from 2-6 BC.
 - iv. Many of the church Fathers and a scholar named M.S. Mills believe Jesus was actually born in 2 or 3 BC. That means we are actually in the year 2017 or 2018 and we will have to live through 2020 all over again... :)
3. The angelic announcement
- i. Good News that will cause great joy for all the people
 - ii. "Euangelion" is a Greek word that means Good News and is also translated Gospel. Have you ever received Good News that brought you joy? Maybe a job, promotion, engagement, birth of a child? Or maybe you won a contest?
 - 1. In Roman Culture it referred to an announcement that a New King has been born and a new era had begun or a major victory in war. Reserved for significant announcements. It was hailed among the Romans as a time of rejoicing

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2. Luke did not just get the idea from the Romans. This was prophesied in the Old Testament - Good News in Isaiah – Isa 40:9, 52:7, 61:1 Luke not just drawing on Roman culture, but drawing on God’s word
 3. Isa. 40:9 You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!” (NIV)
 4. Isa. 52:7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”
 - i. Notice the similarities in this verse to the Priene inscription and to Luke 2.
 - ii. Isaiah was written approximately 650-700 years before the Priene inscription.
 5. Conclusion: The true and eternal Good news is not based on a human ruler rising to power. It is based on the fulfillment of God’s plan to send His son as the true savior of the world.
 6. So then, what is the content of that good news that brings joy?
- iii. First of all let’s look at the word “Savior”
1. Mary applies this to God Luke 1:47 – “My spirit rejoices in God my savior.”
 2. In the next story in Luke chapter 1 it is used by Zechariah –
 - a. 68 “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. 69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David 70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), 71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— 72 to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
 3. Used several times for YHWH in the OT 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16 -
 - a. Isa. 43:3, 11 - 3 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; 11 I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior.
 4. In Hebrew it means deliverer
 - a. To rescue and deliver from peril of any kind. Includes physical healing, protection from enemies, deliverance from sin and judgment
 - b. In the Bible, “salvation” has the same meanings as in secular Greek: deliverance, protection, healing, health, happiness, and prosperity; but the Hebrew verb *yāša* , which is most commonly used, would originally have the nuance “be spacious, have plenty of room, be comfortable. Spicq, C., & Ernest, J. D. (1994). Theological lexicon of the New Testament (Vol. 3, p. 349). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

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- c. Let's look at this idea of being rescued from peril and brought into a spacious place. In Ps. 18:1-6, 16-18 - 1 I love you, LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. 3 I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies. 4 The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. 5 The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. 6 In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. 16 He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. 17 He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. 18 They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support. 19 He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.
5. Israel was looking for a savior to deliver them from the oppression of the Romans and to bring them into a spacious place where they could be free and live and worship God without constraint. For the church salvation is about being delivered from all of our enemies, especially sin, death, judgment and the devil and to be brought into the New Promised Land of eternal life in the New Heavens and earth.
6. Examples from today:
 - a. Society is always looking for a savior
 - i. From Coronavirus – science will save us
 - ii. Politically – The Government (or change in the government will save us), the supreme court will save us.
 - iii. A stronger military, a generous donor, etc.
 - b. Many don't think we do need a savior. Humanity can save itself if we can just agree on some values and goals and work together towards them. "We don't need a god..."
7. Saviors that came in the Old Testament and in human kingdoms only produced temporal salvation until the next enemy came or their civilization collapsed. But Jesus brings eternal salvation which can never be undone. He is the true savior and His salvation is not limited to one culture, it is for "all the people".
8. A further thing to note is that the name Jesus or Yeshua means "Yahweh saves or Yahweh is salvation". Savior is built into Jesus' name.
9. The Bible teaches that we all need a savior. Because we cannot save ourselves from sin, death, satan and the judgment that is coming. Only Jesus

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can save us and bring us out into a spacious place. That place is the new heavens and the new earth.

iv. Christ/Messiah

1. Is Christ just Jesus last name?
2. The term means anointed one. Specifically smeared with oil.
Used for beautification (Ruth 3:3), Used for guests (Luke 7:38, 46), Used for healing (Jer. 51:8; Mark 6:13), used in hygienic sense in Ezek. 16:9, Used for preparation for burial (Gen. 50:2; John 12:3, 7; 19:39–40, Used in a religious sense (of an object, Gen. 28:18, 20) Utley, R. J. (2004). The Gospel according to Luke (Vol. Volume 3A, Lk 2:11). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International. The tabernacle and all the furniture in it was anointed – Ex. 40:9, Lev. 8:10-12
3. It was used for many purposes, but in our context it was used for installing leaders:
 - a. Prophets – 1 Kings 19:16 (Elijah to anoint Elisha as prophet), 1 Chron. 16:22, Ps. 105:15 – Not sure if this was metaphorical or actually happened.
 - b. Priests – Ex. 40:13,15 (Aaron and his sons), Not sure if all prophets were anointed after this or just the high priest.
 - c. Kings - Mashiach, 2 Sam 5:3 (David), 2 Sam 7:12-17 (Davidic Covenant), Ps. 2:2, Dan. 9:26, 10:3
 - d. Jesus – Ps. 2:2, Dan. 9:26, 10:3, Isaiah 61:1
4. Israel was expecting a Son of David to arise and re-take the throne, overthrow Israel's enemies, re-establish the Kingdom of Israel and usher in a golden age. They understood this to be the Kingdom of God. The Messiah or Christ was the one who would do this.
5. The term Christ or Messiah in this context refers to the rightful King of Israel, who would by virtue of the prophecies in Ps 2, be King over all the earth.
6. Mary's message from the angel: 1:31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
7. Now let's look at Zechariah's prophecy:
Luke 1:67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare

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his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (ESV)

8. If we add the book of Hebrews to this discussion we would find that Jesus is not only anointed as King, but he is also anointed as Priest and is God’s ultimate prophet. In the person of Jesus, the true anointed King, Priest and Prophet has emerged to bring salvation.

v. Lord –

1. applied to Caesar & applied to God by the angelic Choir (2:9)
 2. Ps. 110:1 The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” (NIV)
 3. A general term that can mean mister, sir, master, owner, husband or God-man. The term YHWH is translated as Lord. The Jews were reluctant to use God’s name because they didn’t want to be guilty of accidentally taking it in vain, so they had another word for Lord called “Adon” that they substituted in its place. This word was translated into the Greek “Kurios” which was applied by the NT authors to point to Jesus deity. Luke 2:11; John 20:28; Acts 10:36; 1 Cor. 2:8; Phil. 2:11; James 2:1; Rev. 19:16 Utley, R. J. (2004). The Gospel according to Luke (Vol. Volume 3A, Lk 2:11). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.
 4. In Ps. 110 - There is a purposeful blending of LORD and Lord to indicate the connection between Yahweh and Jesus. The fact that Luke takes the term Savior and Lord which were OT terms for Yahweh and applies them to Jesus, indicates that we are to see Jesus deity. He is the Yahweh who was to come and save His people.
 5. Ps 110 leads us to conclude that the term Lord refers to Jesus authority over the whole earth and also His authority over heaven. Jesus is the ruler of all realms, whether invisible or material.
- vi. Jesus full name – Lord Jesus Christ or the confession, “Jesus Christ is Lord” contains all three of these elements. Yahweh is salvation (Jesus), and He is the true and eternal King of the Jews and the world (Christ), and He is Lord of the whole universe and of every realm visible and invisible (Lord).
- vii. God has come in the flesh to save us from sin, sickness, satan, suffering and death and to take us to an eternal spacious place where we are safe forever.

4. To conclude, let’s look briefly at the shepherds’ process

a. First they received the message –

- i. They heard the message from the angels and took it to heart. Many people do not want to hear the message or if they do they don’t take it to heart.
 1. We need to hear the message that Jesus has come as the savior of the world. He saves us from our sin, from sickness and disease, from death,

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from the wrath of God and He is coming again as the savior to raise us from the dead and welcome us into the “broad space” of His eternal Kingdom, the new heaven and new earth.

- b. Second the shepherds responded to the message
 - i. They didn’t just say “whatever”. They checked it out to verify it and experience it for themselves. Earlier in Luke, Mary asked clarifying questions about the message she received and responded in faith – “Be it done to me as you have said.”
 - ii. The shepherds responded by “hurrying” to see the thing they had been told about.
 - iii. We need to respond to this message as well by making our own confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, not just of heaven and earth, but He is Lord of every area of my life. And then spending time with him in prayer, worship, the word of God and fellowship with other believers get to know Him. We need to “taste and see that the Lord is good.”
- c. Third, they repeated the message
 - i. They spread the message everywhere. They did not just pass on what they had heard, but it was what they had personally experienced.
 - 1. We need to repeat this message as well... As we have opportunity and in accordance with our giftings
 - ii. 1 Pet. 3:15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander
 - 1. Live a life that makes the message attractive
 - 2. Pray for opportunities
 - 3. Be prepared to share (study the message)
 - 4. Be respectful and honoring when you do.

5. Conclusion

- a. The Coming of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ is true Good News that brings Great Joy. We need a Savior that is able to not just save us from the difficulties of this life but is able to save us for all eternity and bring us into a Kingdom of Hope and Peace, Joy and Love where we will be free from all of our enemies – sin, sickness, poverty, fear, death and satan. This is a message worth receiving, responding to and repeating.
- b. It leads us to the final response the shepherds made. They glorified God and praised Him... which leads us to our theme for next week... worshipping.